

Community Sweet Corn Project Helps Feed Thousands

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

Thanks to a Fort Morgan, Colo., farm family, dozens of volunteers, and business sponsors, area people who use food shelves or eat at soup kitchens enjoy a rare treat - fresh sweet corn. In 2018, about 130 volunteers picked and packed more than 100,000 ears of corn in 4 hrs. Thirty-one bagged and shrink-wrapped pallets of sweet corn filled two Food Bank of the Rockies refrigerated semi-trailers to distribute throughout the region.

Bruce Postovit, who sells seed and works for Bayer, and his farming friend, Mike Kosman, first teamed up for the project in 2012. Postovit had participated in his church's "gleaning the fields" where volunteers pick leftover vegetables after harvest and donate them to food pantries.

"I thought why not grow a whole crop for charity," Postovit says. "I asked Mike if he was willing to grow corn and he didn't hesitate at all."

After Kosman died of cancer at 56 in 2015, his family continued the project.

"We keep it going in memory of Dad," says Austin Kosman, who farms with his brother, Alex, their mother, Kerri, and sister, Jamie. "Bayer provides the seed. We provide the land, irrigation and fertilizer."

Last year the Kosmans planted more than

in previous years - 4 acres of a yellow/white variety of sweet corn in 36 1,500 ft. rows on the edge of an irrigated silage corn field. There are no cross pollination issues because pollination times are different. By early August, the corn was ready to pick.

Postovit organizes volunteers - some who pick the corn and fill mesh bags (80-100 ears/bag), and others who move the bags to workers who stack and shrink-wrap pallets. Also, key to the project are business donors for everything from seed to bags to a barbecue meal for volunteers.

"But what makes it doable is the Food Bank of the Rockies, a nonprofit that serves to food banks in the region," Postovit says.

Having a large number of volunteers is also crucial. Many hands sped up the 2018 harvest, which was important considering the heat and humidity of the day.

Postovit's son, Adam, has started a similar project near Omaha, Neb., and Postovit would like to see it copied in more regions of the country.

"I have a template and can give a step-by-step approach to anyone who is interested," he offered.

"It's turned into a big community thing," Kosman adds. "It takes everyone to do it."



Every year a Colorado farm family grows a crop of sweet corn for local food shelves. Last year about 130 volunteers participated in the harvest, picking the corn and filling mesh bags. Other workers stack and shrink-wrap the bags onto pallets.

The project is like a memorial for the Kosman family, paying tribute to Mike Kosman with a worthwhile charitable venture.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bruce Postovit, 11395 Canterbury Lane, Parker, Colo. 80138 (ph 720 201-6287; bruce.postovit@bayer.com).

Kit Turns Garden Tractor Into Mini John Deere

Taylor Hartman figured out a way to recreate the tractors he admired on his grandfathers' farms. The tractors just happen to be a little smaller since he builds them by modifying garden tractors. With the help of his business partner and father, Steve Hartman, who has tool and die experience, Hartman sells kits and custom-builds tractors for other wannabe tractor owners.

The Hartmans' first mini tractor was an International Harvester 856 made from a Wheel Horse garden tractor. After about a year's work they sold it at a farm tractor auction.

"I got the bug to do another one," Hartman says. "I bought a John Deere 110 garden tractor to make into a John Deere 4020 mini farm tractor."

By 2018, the bug turned into Midwest Mini Tractor Company out of Goshen, Ind. In addition to building custom tractors for customers, the Hartmans sell a kit for DIYers to turn a John Deere 110 garden tractor into a JD 5020 (\$1,000) or 4020 (\$1,250).

It's the first of many kits Hartman plans to offer. Each takes time and trial and error to design every part to get the right proportion and appearance of the full size tractor.

"The fender is critical," Hartman says, and the attention to detail and getting that right sets his tractors apart from other mini tractor builders. Parts are made at a local shop with CNC milling machines and laser cutters, then powder-coated.

The Hartmans assemble the parts with stainless steel hardware.

"We make the kits as easy to install as we can," Hartman says. "We make the parts bolt-on. There are just some holes to drill, but there is no welding or cutting."

When they customize a tractor, they tear down the "donor" tractor to the bare frame, sandblast it, and go through all the mechanical and electrical parts before transforming it into a replica of a regular size tractor. The only notable difference on the JD 4020 minis is the lights. Hartman uses four small LED lights instead of two regular lights to get the right fender proportions.

"One garden tractor I worked on recently was rusty and torn apart. I like to see them get repurposed," Hartman says. "They are functional to pull a wagon or attachment. A lot of people buy them for their grandkids. Others have them for show and parade pieces."

The Hartmans have had requests for kits and builds for other models of tractors including International Harvester, Case, Minneapolis Moline, Oliver and a variety of John Deere tractors. They plan to offer more tractor models in the future.

Call Hartman for a price quote on specific parts or for a custom tractor.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Taylor Hartman, Midwest Mini Tractor Company, 57271 Clydesdale Dr., Goshen, Ind. 46528 (ph 574 312-4349; Facebook: Midwestminitractorcompany; midwestmini@comcast.net).

Photo at right shows the 4020 kit that Hartman sells to convert a Deere 110 into a mini 4020, as shown at far right.



Parts bolt onto a Deere 110 garden tractor to transform it into a mini 5020.



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